



Morning Alert - Tuesday, February 14, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that the UN Security Council will soon convene an emergency meeting in response to North Korea's launch of a ballistic missile on Sunday. TBS led with this year's Grammy Awards, saying that many celebrities criticized President Trump's executive order during the ceremony. Other broadcasters reported that actress Fumika Shimizu announced she will retire from show business to devote herself to spreading the teachings of a religious group called Happy Science.

Most papers front-paged Prime Minister Abe's remarks on TV programs last night on the details of his weekend meetings with President Trump. They also gave prominent coverage to North Korea's launch of a ballistic missile on Sunday, focusing on the UN Security Council's plan to hold an emergency meeting.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Abe discloses details of U.S.-Japan summit

All papers front-paged remarks made on TV by Prime Minister Abe upon his return from Florida, in which he spoke about his meetings with President Trump. According to the premier, the two officials agreed to meet every time they both attend the same international conference. On the joint statement issued after the Washington summit specifying the U.S. security commitment to the Senkakus, Abe disclosed that the President did not give the green light to the document until the day it was released. On the bilateral auto trade imbalance, the premier said the President did not mention it after he explained Japanese manufacturers' great contribution to creating jobs in America.

As the President did not bring up Japan's host nation support, the premier underscored that this issue has been "settled." The two leaders also discussed North Korea, Syria, Iran, Ukraine, and other international issues, with the premier saying: "I think the U.S. will adopt a tougher approach to the DPRK .... The Obama administration was extremely careful about the use of force. The Trump administration will conduct a review [of the North Korean issue], put all options on the table, and resolve it diplomatically." Abe stressed that he is confident that he will be able to win the U.S. leader's understanding for his rapprochement with Russian President Putin to resolve the Northern Territories dispute.

According to Asahi, the premier dismissed criticism that he was too cozy with the President by saying: "The U.S. must not be isolated. Somebody has to build a relationship of trust and say to the President what has to be said. I would like to forge a relationship with him so that both of us can jointly make contributions to resolving outstanding issues in the world." All papers wrote that the opposition bloc is critical of Abe's pronounced overtures, projecting that opposition lawmakers are set to grill him over this at a Lower House committee today. They added, however, that with the exception of the Japanese Communist Party, other opposition parties largely welcomed Abe's accomplishments on the security front in the summit.

As for the red carpet treatment accorded to the premier, Asahi speculated that the President chose not to "bash" Japan in order to display to the world that he is not completely ostracized despite the international uproar over his executive order on immigration.

### **Vice President likely to visit Japan in April**

In a front-page report, Asahi cited a GOJ source as saying that Vice President Pence is likely to visit Japan in April. The paper noted that since the Vice President will co-chair with Deputy Prime Minister Aso an "economic dialogue" that was agreed upon by President Trump and Prime Minister Abe during their summit, the two nations may engage in intense discussions on a U.S. proposal on sealing a bilateral free trade agreement. Other papers also reported extensively on the planned economic dialogue, explaining that the U.S. and Japan apparently have different goals in mind. Tokyo is apparently hoping to deflect pressure from the Trump administration to open up specific markets, such as autos and agriculture, by highlighting its readiness to deepen bilateral cooperation in infrastructure investment in the U.S., energy development, cybersecurity, and space. The Japanese side reportedly projects that the issue of currency will not be brought up in the economic dialogue. The articles also said although the prime minister appeared to be successful in establishing a close rapport with the President, some GOJ officials are still concerned that the "erratic" U.S. leader will resort to "transactional diplomacy" by pressuring Japan to make concessions on trade and other issues in return for taking a soft approach on other issues.

Sankei said some GOJ and industry officials are worried about the possible recurrence of the fierce trade war between the two governments that occurred in the 1980s despite the close ties forged by

President Reagan and Prime Minister Nakasone. These officials reportedly remember vividly that Tokyo was forced to open up its orange and beef markets in response to pressure from Washington.

### **Seventy percent of Japanese view U.S.-Japan summit positively**

Mainichi and Tokyo Shimbun published the results of a Kyodo public opinion poll that found some 70% of respondents said the summit between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe was “good,” while almost 20% said it was “not good.” Three out of four said they “cannot comprehend” President Trump’s executive order on immigration.

### **U.S., Japan reaffirm unity in response to DPRK missile launch**

All papers reported extensively on North Korea’s test-launch of a ballistic missile on Sunday, spotlighting the strong response from the U.S. and Japan in the form of a joint statement and the joint appearance before the media of the two leaders echoing their resolve not to give in to any DPRK provocations. According to the dailies, after learning of the missile test while having dinner with Prime Minister Abe on Saturday night in West Palm Beach, the premier told President Trump that he would meet with the press to condemn the Kim regime’s provocation and the President offered to accompany him.

The papers predicted that President Trump, displeased with the Kim regime apparently trying to test his administration in its early stage, is likely to abandon the Obama administration’s “strategic patience” and take a tougher line vis-à-vis Pyongyang. Nikkei said Washington probably will not hesitate to raise tensions on the Korean Peninsula if necessary and step up pressure on China to persuade its defiant neighbor to halt its nuclear and missile development. Asahi said, however, that the Trump administration has not yet solidified its position on North Korea, pointing out that the President did not criticize the DPRK by name in the hastily-arranged press event with Abe.

### **Japan conveys concern about Russia’s naming of uninhabited islands in Northern Territories**

Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ on Monday conveyed to Moscow its apprehension about Prime Minister Medvedev’s decision to give Russian names to three small uninhabited islands in the disputed Northern Territories.

In a related story, Yomiuri wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida is likely to hold talks with his Russian counterpart Lavrov on the margins of the G20 foreign ministerial to be held in Bonn later this week. They will probably agree to accelerate discussions for the launch of “joint economic activities” on the contested territories.

## **SECURITY**

### **Suga comments on results of mayoral election in Okinawa**

Asahi took up yesterday's press remarks by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who commented on the results of Sunday's mayoral election in Urasoe, Okinawa, in which the incumbent easily defeated a rival candidate backed by Okinawa Governor Onaga. The government spokesman stressed that the outcome shows that some LDP officials were wrong in insisting that the recent launch of sea-based FRF construction off Camp Schwab would have adverse effects on the election. Given that an LDP-backed candidate also prevailed over his pro-Onaga rival in January's mayoral election on Miyako Island, Suga stressed that it is no longer necessary to link the Henoko relocation plan to the performance of LDP candidates in future elections in Okinawa.

Mainichi said the governor now finds himself in an even more difficult situation on account of the two election setbacks, as well as the confirmation made by the Trump administration that the Henoko plan is the "only solution" for Futenma relocation. His associates are worried that it may become difficult for him to win reelection next year if a candidate close to the governor is defeated in the planned mayoral race in Uruma in April.

### **MOD puts off start of study panel on missile defense**

Mainichi wrote that the Defense Ministry has decided not to inaugurate for the time being a taskforce charged with examining the feasibility of introducing upgraded missile defense systems, such as "Aegis Ashore" and THAAD platforms, in response to reservations raised by some LDP officials. They have reportedly insisted that the Trump administration may capitalize on the establishment of such a panel to press Japan to procure expensive U.S. systems.

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